

3-2011

Preserving Cultural Landscapes and NEOMAP Project Update for 2011

J. Christopher Gillam

University of South Carolina - Columbia, gillamc@mailbox.sc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/sciaa_staffpub



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Publication Info

Published in *Legacy*, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2011, pages 22-23.

<http://www.cas.sc.edu/sciaa/>

© 2011 by The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

This Article is brought to you by the Archaeology and Anthropology, South Carolina Institute of at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty & Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

Savannah River Archaeology Research

Preserving Cultural Landscapes and NEOMAP Project Update for 2011

By J. Christopher Gillam, Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (SRARP)

The Neolithization and Modernization of East Asian Inland Seas (NEOMAP) project has provided me with some unique research and educational experiences in recent years. NEOMAPs' host institution, the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) in Kyoto, is an incredible think-tank of international scholars working on an array of topics concerning humanity's relationship with the environment, ranging from

prehistoric archaeology to the genetic changes of plant and animal species. NEOMAPs' goals are specifically to gain a better understanding of the cultural landscapes and landscape changes that occurred as cultures developed agriculture and became more socially complex (Neolithization) and further changed through industrialization, economic trade, organized religion, and the political development and turmoil of nations (Modernization).

In addition to traditional research products, such as individual and group reports, academic presentations, and publications, another key role is to advance theoretical, factual, and practical issues concerning our relationship with

nature through intellectual discourse, public outreach, and the encouragement of innovative thinking. In that role, annual meetings and special public symposia have been particularly fruitful. My part in the public symposia has ranged from talks alongside contemporary science fiction writers on the parallels of science-fact and science-fiction (Gillam 2009a),—the most fun I've had in a scientific symposium—to becoming better advocates for humanity and nature (Gillam 2010) with examples of pollution and waste in beautiful Kyoto, as well as the U.S., probably the most contentious talk of my career. For the latter topic, the use of the local setting of Kyoto as a negative example, was a pre-approved and strategic choice to

foster debate that successfully ruffled a few feathers in the audience, leading to a fantastic discussion about projected, public, and marketed perception versus environmental reality! Kyoto is the historic jewel of Japan, but is also a large modern city. There too, nature bears the toll of humanity...however, I still love Kyoto!

In March 2011, the annual meeting will focus on cultural landscape preservation, a topic that has international significance given the globalization of modern culture (consumption monoculture) and increasing impacts of population on present and past cultural landscapes worldwide (overpopulation, pollution, waste, mining, built



Fig. 1: Scholars from Japan and the southeastern U.S. visiting the Fig Island site, South Carolina, in 2007. (SCIAA photo)

environments, and consumption infrastructure). This topic will give me another opportunity to talk about the archaeology of South Carolina. As you may recall from prior issues of *Legacy*, a large part of my mission in participating in international studies is to promote interest in the archaeology here at home. As part of that goal, I have not only given many presentations on the archaeology of South Carolina at international meetings, but have also led three archaeology tours here that have fostered a growing research interest in South Carolina by my international colleagues (Figs. 1 and 2; Gillam 2007, 2009b).

My presentation in March will highlight many well-known archaeological and historical landmarks in South Carolina within the context of preserving cultural landscapes, including historic Charleston and plantations, the archaeology of the Savannah River Site facility, and notable prehistoric sites such as Sewee Shell Ring, Fig Island, and the Allendale chert quarries. Here in South Carolina, coastal sites are perhaps facing the greatest jeopardy. Not only is over-development a problem there, as in other parts of the state, but natural disasters such as hurricanes,

earthquakes, and sea-level rise all have the potential to devastate areas of significant cultural heritage within a single lifetime. Earthquakes might not seem an obvious choice in South Carolina, but elevation shifts and sand-blows can radically alter sandy coastal plain landscapes and are devastating to historic masonry structures, as witnessed by the historic Charleston earthquake of 1886.

Add to that list of hazards the troubled economy that is cutting state and national funding to both natural and cultural heritage interests and the problems become even more acute and timely. There are no simple answers other than public and institutional vigilance to protect and preserve our heritage. Politicians share one common desire that is to keep their constituents happy, so we must all do our best to raise their awareness of these issues. Likewise, "Save-a-site, support your local archaeologist!" Your kind support of archaeological projects both here and abroad is a critical and valued resource. Thanks for your continued support!

References

Gillam, J. Christopher

2007 There Is Much to Learn from Distant Shores, Cultures, and Colleagues. *Legacy* 11(2): 3, 6.

Gillam, J. Christopher
2009a *Migrating from Science Fact to Science Fiction: Lessons on Distant Migrations by Formative Cultures on Land and Sea*. Invited presentation for the Ecohistory Program Symposium, "History of Civilization and Environment," Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), 29 August 2009, Kyoto, Japan.

Gillam, J. Christopher.
2009b International Outreach: The Southeast Prehistoric and Historic Landscapes Tour. *Legacy* 13(2): 3.

Gillam, J. Christopher
2010 *Past Landscapes, Future Knowledge: Becoming Better Advocates for Humanity and Nature*. Invited presentation for the 2010 NEOMAP Landscape Workshop, "What Does Landscape History Mean to Us, and How Can Landscape Studies Contribute to Our Future?" Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), 16 March 2010, Kyoto, Japan.



Fig. 2: Scholars from Russia, Japan, Peru, and the Netherlands visiting the Ocmulgee site, Georgia, in 2009. (SCIAA photo)